No. 33.

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

March, 1892.

QUESTION CLX.

After open Branch meetings and public lectures, is it or is it not well to invite questions on Theosophy from visitors? Some of us think one way, and some another. Can the FORUM *decide?*

Ans.—No, the FORUM cannot decide, but it can contribute towards a decision. There is much on general grounds and from experience to be urged *pro* and *con*, and much depends upon the particular locality and the particular Branch. Even more depends upon the person deputed to reply to such questions. If he (or she) is well-informed, clear-headed, acute, unusually quick-witted, and not easily badgered or confused, the replies may be instructive and convincing, and the tables may be turned on such questioners as hoped to corner or ridicule. But experts in such art are very rare, and if, as the chances are, the responder is deficient in either coolness or dexterity, a lame reply gives the game to the querent and leads the audience to suppose that no sound reply is possible. Too much therefore depends on one individual, and he probably a tyro.

In judging this matter one has to consider what class of questions is apt to be propounded on such occasions. A miscellaneous audience before a Theosophical lecturer includes a few Theosophists, some persons who have a greater or less intellectual interest in a growing topic, and a majority who are merely curious, critical, or malevolent. In each of the two latter divisions are certain ones who like to be *en evidence*, and who are eager for a chance to show wit or superiority in discussion ; and there are probably a few to whom the whole subject is strange and who are without comprehension of the terms used or the thought-lines followed. When, then, questions are invited, who respond ? Possibly an occasional thinker, sincerely desirous to have some obscure point cleared or difficulty solved. But as the number of such is small and each usually modest, the chances are that the respondents will be either those who want information better attainable in elementary pamflets, or those who want to turn the subject into ridicule and to "show off" before a gathering which may be assumed largely sympathetic to the hostile. In the former case, time is wasted on queries absurd, tangled, or elementary ; in the latter case, on queries insincere, palpably mere pretext, and conducive to no good.

Suppose the thesis has been on "Reincarnation." One of the former class asks, like Nicodemus, "How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born ?" ; and another wishes to know whether he has to come back if he doesn't want to ; a third inquires the difference between Christians and Buddhists ; and a fourth doesn't understand if incarnation and reincarnation are the same. Then a member of the second class wants to know if the lecturer has read Plato ; and another if he can tell where the querent was when on earth the last time ; still another would like to ask whether he will get rid of his rheumatism in the interval between re-births ; and a fourth is constrained to inquire whether his mother-in-law will come back at the same time he does. This last is supposed a master-piece of wit, and evokes general delight at the lecturer's expense.

Now during all this time the lecturer is probably getting vexed over the apparent failure of his effort to inspire seriousness, and is doubtful as to the expediency of ever wasting time again in such atmosphere. The Theosophists present are pained at the exhuber-

ance of nonsense and frivolity, and yet hesitate to take the position of checking free speech. The general audience are criticising each new querent, and are soon on the alert for the diversion which is a natural re-action after a topic of sobriety. And the outcome of the meeting is a dispersion of the serious reflection and grave interest which it was its purpose to arouse, the impression made at the close of the lecture being effaced by the events succeeding it.

Knowing these things, some of our most sincere lecturers give their services upon condition that the audience shall be dismissed when the lecture is finished. They claim that they wish to leave seeds of thought in each mind, and that those seeds are killed if the ground is straightway ploughed up. To go away with certain definite ideas, all the better if warmed with the magnetism of an earnest speaker, is, they say, what they desire for each auditor, and so will not consent that their effort shall be made void.

The FORUM's judgment and sympathy are on this side, but it fully admits that no uniform rule is desirable, that there are places and occasions when questions may be seemly, and that abuses are less likely in a Branch meeting than at a public lecture.

QUESTION CLXI.

Is it unwise or wrong to say mentally to a person "You are well", or "You are virtuous", "Your higher nature can control your lower"? Is that kind of mental treatment a wrong use of power if the motive is pure and unselfish?

Ans.—The wisdom of such a speech would depend largely upon its truth. That the higher nature can control the lower is at all times a fact, and one need not hesitate to state it mentally or even orally. But to determine whether it is wise and right to say mentally to a person that he is well or virtuous, one must first know whether he is so. If I visit a friend in bed from pneumonia or a broken leg, and if I were then to exclaim interiorly "Oh, you are all right; there is nothing the matter with your lungs or your bone", the assertion would be most injudicious because a fib, and fibs are objectionable even when the motive is pure and unselfish. Or if I visit a jail and say mentally to a murderer or a thief "My good man, you are really a high-principled personage, in spite of your

disguise", such language would be reprehensible, since the moral law does not tolerate falsehoods any more than murders and thefts. It would certainly be wiser in either case to make the assertion mentally rather than audibly, for otherwise I should be suspected of lunacy and promptly "bounced" by the nurse or the warden. On the supposition, then, that another person is *not* well or *not* virtuous, my insisting that he was would be both unwise and wrong, and would be discountenanced by moralists of any school.

On the supposition that he was in health bodily or moral, my inwardly asserting the fact would not be open to animadversion, but neither, on the other hand, would it have any point. Life is too short to be wasted in ejaculation of truisms, and might more profitably be used in the pursuit of truth.

The Questioner probably has in his mind (more likely *her*) some such problem as this :—a person is sick or bad ; sickness and badness are manifestations of thought; if unspoken thought can influence him to reverse thought and so to cure, is it not right to use it? Of course if the evil was imaginary, this would be all very well. But there is nothing more outlandish than the notion that a fact will disappear if you shake your head at it. Why should anything be annulled because you dont choose to recognize it? What force has mere denial? The ostrich and the "mental healer" are perhaps in Nature the only practitioners on the theory that danger will vanish if one shuts his eyes to it. All other beings understand very well that the first step in action is to learn what are the facts. If the facts are disagreeable, none the less are they real. Reality is not confined to the pleasing and the joyful. The next step is to apply the appropriate treatment. This is not vociferation or denial, but remedy. When my washwoman is short of work and her children are freezing and starving, not one of them will become warm or fed by my declaiming that there is no such thing as cold or hunger, and that there can't be because there oughtn't to be. This is mere babble. If the misery is to be relieved it will be through my sending the coal-cart and the butcher, not a psychologist or a metaphysician. And if I am still sceptical as to hunger's being anything more than a mental notion, to be assuaged by "mental treatment," there is only one cure for me—*to try it.* Two days of fasting will do more than volumes of "Mental Science", or even the reading of the FORUM.

Similarly as to disease, whether in physique or morals. The first step is ascertainment of the *facts*. Is the man really ill; if so, with what? Is he really an evil-doer; if so, from what bias? Then comes the remedy. It is certainly not a denial of the facts just ascertained. If he has typhoid fever, no cure will come from my insisting that there is no such thing as typhoid; if he is a swindler, I do not reform him by claiming that there is nothing to be reformed in. In each case the treatment must be fitted to the facts and based upon the facts. Otherwise it is unreal, visionary, fantastic.

The last clause of the Question is virtually answered by foregoing paragraphs. If the person mentally addressed is *not* well or virtuous, there is no use of "power" at all, for a mere affirmation unsupported by fact is hollow and impotent. Nor is there "power" in a mere assertoin of a state of things already existing. Hence there is nothing "wrong" in the use of a power wholly imaginary, though there may be much that is foolish or thoughtless or superstitious.

W. Q. J.—Buddha and Jesus—two great teachers—performed cures. Not by assertion and denial but by scientific use of power. To the wicked whom they cured they said "sin no more." Both taught that the cause of sorrow was evil thought leading to evil act, but neither said that that existed not which was plain before one's eyes. They recognized the existence of fact, of law, of reason. In some cases they could not cure. Why? Because the causes working on the sufferer were too strong for them. Mere optimism which says all is good is of a kind that grows out of sentiment unsupportable by reason. We ought to do all the good we can, but that does not mean we should blind our minds to the relativity which is necessary for cognition.

QUESTION CLXII.

Do persons remain in Devachan for a time proportioned to their previous life on earth? For example: does one dying at 100 remain in Devachan ten times as long as one dying at ten?

K. E. T.—This question exhibits a wrong scale of reckoning applied to the Devachanic existence. It is not our conception of

time, as we count years, but our proportion of merit together with the undeserved suffering of an earth-life that metes out the span of the entity's sojourn in that serenely subjective state of rest that closes over the turmoil of our terrestrial lives.

It will thus be seen that, with the correct scale applied, the centenarian who had cumbered his years with selfish deeds, vicious habits, and impure thoughts would justly find his Devachanic reward rapidly exhausted as compared with that of a child of ten, into whose tender years a vast measure of right thought and right action might have been compressed.

W. Q. J.—On this the ancient writers say : "And when the reward is exhausted the being sinks back again into mortal life."

QUESTION CLXIII.

(1) *Does the term Higher and lower Manas state a difference in kind or only in degree?* (2) *If the "Atmic Ray" is the nucleus around which every entity is evolved, how can it then be said in the case of a man to only hover over him?* (3) *And if Atma only hovers over him, what actuates the evolution of man in that case, and of what in man can divinity be predicated?*

Jno.—(1) A difference in kind, as well as in degree, I think. In the ordinary man the lower mind is inseparably connected with brain action, while the Higher is entirely free from it. The lower is but a reflection (lasting but the one incarnation) of the Higher, which retains recollections of all past lives.

We see the direct operation of the Higher upon the lower in the highest inspirations of poets, in flashes of genius in inventors and others, in calculating boys, in fever which brings on the prophetic insight, etc. The adept upon merging his consciousness into an object to learn all about that object is then in the Higher Manasic consciousness. The lower mind is incapable of all the above, for it arrives at conclusions based upon other deductions, while the Higher Manas does away with reasoning and leaps to correct conclusions. The lower Manas is encompassed by time and form, while the Higher is above and beyond them.

(2) We get into a maze of difficulties when we attempt to apply the yard-stick to these higher principles. Atma is beyond our con-

ception—at least beyond our ability to describe in words, for it is *not* objective ; and since all our ideas are associated with time and form we can only use figures of speech to illustrate Atma's relationship to the lower Quaternary. Atma is said to "overshadow," but there can really be no "up," "down," "in," or "out" to the subjective plane. I should describe Atma's relationship as a magnetic affiliation, through which it acts as a propelling force.

(3) The last sentence is an answer in as few words as I can give to the first part of the 3d Question.

Let us conceive that in the Logos there are centers of force and that these are the highest bases for action of men, Gods, or animalculæ ; just as in the astral light there are whirling centers of force called elementals. After the life-cycle through the objective worlds has been gone through with, and man's consciousness (now in Kama-Manas) has risen to Atmic consciousness (as it will in humanity at close of 7th Round), then can "divinity be predicated"—at least from our present standpoint, though it will not be so from that of a Dhyani-Buddhi. Even Buddhic consciousness cannot be appreciated by our Kama-Manasic consciousness, so embued with the "dire heresy of separateness," and in Atmic consciousness there is union with the divinity, Para-Nirvana is reached, "the atmic ray," that center of force in the Logos, realizes its inseparableness with the whole.

QUESTION CLXIV.

Are children dying before 7 annihilated? H. P. B. says that "a child does not acquire its sixth principle"—or become a responsible being capable of generating Karma—until 7 years old.

K. E. T.—There is no equivalent in Oriental Philosophy for the term annihilation, the idea finding no place therein. We are told of change, *i. e.* transformation, but not of destruction, since no spark of vitality can ever be quenched. That a child does not attain its full endowment as a human being until the seventh year does not prove it to be a Karma-less creature, for Karma is inseparable from all existence, each atom even coming under the Great Law. Races that are becoming rapidly extinct, such as the Bushmen of Australia and the hairy Ainos of Northern Japan, are working out

their Karma, and we know that animals are subject to this law, so if we exclude the child therefrom we degrade it below their level.

Now though a child under seven is hardly more than an extra-intelligent and talking animal—many adults, indeed, can claim to be little else—it is not therefore ranked by Theosophy, according to the grim terminology of the Calvinistic creed, among the "non-elect infants" or the "non-elect incapables" of the Westminster Confession.

QUESTION CLXV.

In Jan. "Forum" H. P. B. is quoted as saying, "This is all the secret. Half, if not two thirds, of all our ailings and diseases are the fruit of our imagination and fears." In the same number W. Q. J. says, "The greater number are due to strong physical Karma", and "are entirely beyond the reach of imagination." Will the Forum point out the reconciliation?

W. Q. J.—It is quite true that I said in reply to Q. CLXI that the greater number of diseases are those which are due to physical Karma and beyond the reach of the imagination rather than to the reaction of the imagination upon the body, and that H. P. B. in *Lucifer* said that "half if not two-thirds of our ailings and diseases are the fruit of our imagination", but there seems to be no great contradiction since both statements were general, and in the last *Forum* mine was declared to be in respect to a rough classification and not to a specific accurate one. H. P. B.'s expression "*half if not two thirds*" is well known to be an idiom which means much or little. It is one of those constantly used when one is not speaking of exact quantities. Hence it need not be set over against mine. But if any think it important, then let them consider that I did not say what I did as to the proportions. However, there are no statistics obtainable as to the two classes of causes for disease, and it is very evident that H. P. B. had no thought of being mathematically exact, nor was there need for her to be. Her remark was not to point out proportions but to show how strong imagination may be and how, just as I sought to point out that when the direction of the mind is altered the strain is taken off from the body

and nature makes a further change, instead of our minds bringing about a state of health. A careful glance at the substantial point aimed at in the reply criticised would have revealed nothing of the nature of contradiction between writer and H. P. B.

QUESTION CLXVI.

In a recent discussion upon Karma a prominent Theosophist contended that at death a regular balance-sheet of good and bad Karma was, as it were, automatically made, and the resultant, always bad Karma, was what guided the next incarnation. That the product was always bad Karma, he stated, was proven by the fact that the particular Ego incarnated at all; incarnation being considered a misfortune and necessarily resulting from evil Karma. The other side of the controversy maintained that there was no such process as could be analogued to a balance-sheet; that both good and bad Karma held over; that good Karma as well as bad necessitates reincarnation; and that the future condition of the Ego is the resultant modifications of some or all of both kinds of Karma. The point was unsettled. Will not the FORUM *illuminate us?*

Ans.—The FORUM'S believes that the latter view is correct. The cause of incarnation is not Karma, whether good or bad, but the necessity for evolutionary experience through contact with material life. Karma determines the quality of each section of that life, and when evolution has so far progressed that both material life has been exhausted and Karmic conditions over-passed, incarnation has done its work and ends.

There are several objections to the former view. The striking of a balance-sheet would mean that opposite Karmas cancelled each other as far as both went, and that the surplus of the larger alone adjusted reincarnation. But neither in the seen nor in the unseen world do Karmic forces annul each other in this way. There is, of course, a tendency in opposite ones to counteract each other, but only when on the same plane and of the same species. A disposition to kind acts, for instance, might be fostered so as to oppose a disposition to the reverse, and for a time the two might be equal. But a disposition to unkindness would not be antagon-

ized by a disposition to studiousness, or by the practise of chastity, or by a love of truth. Then again, each distinct act gives birth to a series of effects, and these extend indefinitely even after the act itself has been confronted with an act of opposite kind. If a man ill-treats a child and afterwards benefits another child, the demerit and merit may perhaps cancel each other, but the resentment and suffering brought about in one case, and the gratitude and happiness in the other, start consequences in two lives which may last long years and modify collateral interests, each spreading net-work of events involving distinct Karmic results to the man who originated them. And, indeed, the complicated emotional experiences of any incarnation imply complication in the causes producing them, which goes to show that a number of Karmic influences, different in quality and degree of power but each operative, had been at work,—not merely one constituting a surplus over those cancelled.

Nor is it the fact that such a surplus from such a balance-sheet would always be bad. Why should it? If the end of each incarnation showed more evil than good, not only would evolution be downward instead of upward, but the world would grow steadily worse. The reverse is the fact. Creation would indeed be a curse and the Creator a fiend if the whole evolutionary scheme worked systematically towards deterioration. One's faith in human progress derives support from the contemplation of characters met in private life, characters so noble and fine and generous and rich that the sum of evil at death must be very petty as compared with that of good. There may not be a great many such, but a single case would upset the theory discussed, for even so good a character, being still an ordinary mortal, would have to reincarnate, though not because of predominant evil.

The existence of Adepts is another objection. If the outcome of each incarnation is necessarily bad, how could an Adept ever have developed?

The theory in question probably arose from misconception of the doctrine respecting punishment for wrong. That doctrine is that punishment for evil done on earth is inflicted on the earth, and so requires further incarnation to ensure it. An incarnated being is therefore not a perfect character, or else he wouldn't be here; but it by no means follows that he must have done more bad

than good. Incarnation even at its best is far from being an unmixed blessing, yet we need not add to its gloom by supposing a pre-natal depravity of which it is the proof and which it is certain to augment.

W. Q. J.—Sorry to disagree from the EDITOR, but I must on the distinct assertion that "Karma is not the cause of incarnation." The work *Karma* means "action." Each incarnation of a being is action ; each manifestation of a system of worlds is action on the part of the entities that manifest. It is our Karma that brings us into whatever sort of body, in no matter what sort of environment, with whatever character, good or bad, high or low, broad or narrow. Karma in respect to things about us produces circumstances of environment, of change, for reward, for punishment, for pleasure or for pain. As to ourselves considered as moral beings, it produces from life to life a *tendency* for good, virtuous, wise actions and thoughts, or the reverse. Thus we see one man of lofty character environed by circumstances of the most painful nature, while another of a bestial or vicious character is placed where all circumstances appear to be pleasant. Which is good or bad Karma here? And what is the formula to determine whether Karma is good or bad? In the case of the good man surrounded by adversity it may well be good Karma, if so be that it strengthens him and broadens his sympathies ; while with the other it may be wholly bad, since he only wallows in the mud of sensuality, thus redeepening his evil tendencies. "Good Karma—or action—is that which is pleasing, and bad that which is displeasing, to the Higher Self."

So too the balance-sheet illustration is good, for it is by a balancing of our Karma that we arrive here at such and such a place, with such and such a character, to experience differences of environment. That Karma which works on circumstances may be ordinarily unpleasant and thus by some called bad, but our character, acquired by other Karma, may be such as to enable us to triumph over adversity and now glean help and strength from the field badly sown in other lives by error or by mischance. So to me the discussion seems to have proceeded on wrong lines, while each of the disputants was right in his way but made wrong application. Karma is a doctrine too vast and complicated to be disposed of by set rules applied like balance-sheets to commercial

enterprises; but one thing is certain—Karma is action viewed from every side and on each occasion.

The letter of Col. Olcott, resigning the Presidency of the T. S. because of ill health and expressing purpose to devote himself to literary labor for the Society, together with the Vice-President's reply, was sent to the Branch Secretaries and was published in March *Path.*

No FORUM after the present issue will be sent to Branches owing dues.

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